UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

MID-PACIFIC REGION

SOUTH-CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

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PIPELINE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM FOR
THE PACHECO AND SANTA CLARA CONDUITS AND TUNNELS
SANTA CLARA COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

FONSI-06-110

Recommended by:

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DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECT
PIPELINE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM FOR
THE PACHECO AND SANTA CLARA CONDUITS AND TUNNELS
SANTA CLARA COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that the approval of the pipeline maintenance program (PMP) is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) Number EA-06-110, *Pipeline Maintenance Program for the Pacheco and Santa Clara Conduits and Tunnels, Santa Clara County Water District,* and is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to approve the Pipeline Maintenance Program (PMP) for a section of pipeline in Santa Clara County, approximately 2 miles of the Santa Clara Conduit in San Benito County, and approximately 2.5 miles of the Pacheco Conduit in Merced County. The scope of the project for this undertaking are the Santa Clara Conduit and Pacheco Conduit and any potential staging areas needed to conduct maintenance activities on these Reclamation-owned and administered water conveyance features.

The purpose of this PMP is to provide a program that guides and defines maintenance procedures for the Santa Clara Conduit and Pacheo Conduit.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (District) conducts routine maintenance on water conveyance pipeline systems. The maintenance activities have been conducted on a case-by-case basis. The PMP identifies the range of maintenance activities and provides protocols and procedures for carrying out these activities.

FINDINGS

Air Quality: The emissions of pollutants from PMP activities will be below the threshold listed in the regulation for non-attainment or air quality maintenance areas.

Aesthetics: Impacts will be temporary in nature, small in scale, and will not permanently degrade the visual character of the site.

Noise:

PMP activities will be temporary and periodic and will not impact permanent ambient noise levels in any area. The District has BMPs that will be implemented as part of the PMP and serve to minimize impacts associated with excavation.

Groundwater Resources: The routine preventative and corrective maintenance of the PMP may require that pipelines or sections of pipelines be drained to allow access to the interior of the pipelines. Draining the pipelines will cause temporary increases in the rate and volume of runoff in receiving waters in the project area. Discharge of pipeline water into local waterways, open fields,

swales, or wetlands will be likely. As the quantity of water that will percolate to the basin is small (less than 150 AF would be diverted to waterways) it will not have a substantial affect on groundwater quality or quantity.

Surface Water Resources: Discharge of pipeline water into local waterways, open fields, swales, or wetlands is likely. Draining the pipelines will cause temporary increases in the rate and volume of runoff in receiving waters in the project area.

Water quality in receiving waters could be temporarily impacted by constituents in concentrations that exceed Basin Plan and other agency objectives; however, it will be temporary in nature. Turbidity, temperature, and pH will be monitored during discharges and water will be treated or discharge rates will be modified if Regional Water Quality Control Board objectives were exceeded.

Discharge could cause erosion, silty or turbid water, bank failures, and deposition of soil in the channel. Impacts will be minimized through the Erosion Control Plan, Bank Protection Work, and re-vegetation.

Land Use: Activities will be performed as described in the PMP. Pipelines will be drained and refilled. Approval of the PMP will not lead to any land use changes.

Biological Resources:

Special-Status Natural Communities

Excavation and draining will not have more than very minor impacts on sycamore alluvial woodland.

Upland Impacts

Excavation for repair of pipeline segments or system components could occur in upland habitat. Impacts to upland habitat in undisturbed areas will be limited. Some burrows may be crushed and some vegetation temporarily removed. Upland areas will be reclaimed and revegetated after work is complete.

Riparian Impacts

Excavation for repair of blow-off valves within banks and for placement of any flow dissipation BMPs could occur in riparian habitats. The areas will be relatively small as compared with the corridor and will be reclaimed after construction.

Some access roads cross riparian corridors to reach blow-offs and vaults located adjacent to streams. Impacts could include vegetation removal and some placement of base material into the riparian corridor. The potential area will be limited to less than 1 acre per year per pipeline. Measures will be implemented to minimize erosion and no new roads will be created in riparian corridors.

Wetland Impacts

Some blow-offs may occur within the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of a stream bank. Up to three of these blow-offs may be excavated for repair per year.

Permanent bank stabilization and erosion control measures may also be implemented within the OHWM of streams. Up to three bank stabilizations will occur per year for a total of 0.57 acres of impact.

Areas will be reclaimed and restored after repairing pipe structures, with no permanent loss of habitat.

Total fill into wetlands for access road repair will be less than 1 acre per year. Some years may require no fill or a very small fraction of fill.

Special-Status Fish Species
Steelhead trout could potentially be impacted by excavation and ground disturbing activities if the activities resulted in sedimentation of nearby waterways. Prior to any ground disturbing work, the District will prepare an Erosion Control Plan to be included in the Excavation Plan.

Streambank stabilization measures will be employed where excavation projects disturb stream channels and their associated riparian areas.

Salmonids' environment can be impaired by both sediment suspended in water and by particles deposited as bedload sediment that can cover spawning gravel and can contribute to elevated water temperatures. Silty or turbid water from project activities will not be discharged into streams, lakes or storm drains.

Special-Status Amphibian Species
California tiger salamander and California red-legged frogs could be impacted by excavation activities if the activities caused sedimentation of habitat, animals are harmed or killed by vehicles or heavy equipment, and/or if excavation affected occupied burrows.

California red-legged frogs may use upland aestivation sites when water levels are low or water temperatures are high, such as in summer and early fall months. Excavation and construction work will most likely occur during this timeframe (outside of the November to April rainy season). Excavation could cause direct harm to frogs if burrows inhabited by the frogs are collapsed by construction equipment, or if individuals using upland habitat are harmed or killed by equipment.

If excavation were to occur along a pipeline within potential California tiger salamander or California red-legged frog habitat, the area will be surveyed, according to current agency protocols by a qualified biologist, for presence of California tiger salamanders and California red-legged frogs prior to any excavation. Any burrows within the construction footprint of areas that are determined to have suitable habitat and potential for occurrence of California tiger salamanders or California red-legged frogs will be examined for individuals following recommendations of the CDFG and/or USFWS or protocol surveys, as appropriate. If any individuals were found, a qualified biologist will remove them to suitable habitat outside of the project limits.

Water releases will likely occur during breeding, and egg and larval growth periods of California red-legged frog (during winter months) and California tiger salamander. Receiving water temperatures will not change by more than 2^{o} F in either direction during discharge, which will avoid water temperature impacts to any listed amphibian present in receiving water.

Reservoir water has a potential to contain exotic species. Discharge of the pipeline water has a small potential to introduce predatory species to areas where these species do not occur. Introduction of amphibian competitors, parasites and nuisance species of plants and animals all could potentially be introduced as a result of water transfers. Pump turbulence and cavitation pressures tend to eliminate most aquatic species from passing through the pipelines.

California tiger salamanders could also be impacted by introduction of predators. During pipeline draining, mesh screens, adhering to Fish Screen Criteria, will be placed over the discharge openings of gravity drain gates and on the suction and discharge piping of any submersible pumps used for pipeline discharge to minimize discharge of species, if the water is discharged to a stream that does not regularly receive imported water directly for recharge.

Special-Status Reptilian Species
Western pond turtles and/or their nests could be crushed or damaged by excavation equipment. Excavation areas will be surveyed prior to ground breaking. Any pond turtles encountered will be moved to a suitable area out of the excavation footprint by a qualified biologist. If a turtle nest is uncovered during excavation, any viable individuals will be moved to suitable habitat.

Impacts to Critical Habitat
Critical habitat designations for the South-Central California coast steelhead, California tiger salamander, and California red-legged frog exist within the project area. Discharge will have a minor temporary impact on steelhead critical habitat through release of water.

Staging and access will not impact South-Central Coast steelhead trout critical habitat.

Permanent velocity dissipation devices will not be installed in any steelhead critical habitat area.

Draining will not adversely impact California tiger salamander or California red-legged frog critical habitat with implementation of surveys of potential habitat, and control of erosion, sedimentation, and scour to protect the habitat.

Excavation could occur through critical habitat for California tiger salamander and possibly the California red-legged frog for pipeline component replacement or for repair to access roads. Prior to excavation areas will be surveyed for species and move any that may be present, following current USFWS protocols. Excavation for pipeline repair will be a temporary effect and will not introduce any new surface features.

Some access road repair may occur within California tiger salamander critical habitat. Any permanent removal of habitat will be compensated for this impact.

Repair
Repair activities will have no direct impact on sensitive species at maintenance site locations.

Staging and Access
Migratory animals such as avian species, rodents, and several of the common wildlife species could potentially be impacted by staging and access adjacent to creeks that serve as migratory corridors.

Staging and access are relatively short term and localized activities that will not permanently inhibit migration and migratory patterns.

Draining

Draining involves discharge of the pipeline into channels, streams, or wetlands. The preferential time of discharge for maintenance work is during small storm events. This timing could coincide with migration of anadromous fish. Temperature, dissolved oxygen, flow, and sedimentation impacts will be minimized during discharge so as not to adversely impact anadromous fishes. Placement of flow check filters and velocity dissipation devices could impede fish passage. Minimizing erosion, scour and sedimentation will minimize any other impacts to any wildlife species that inhabits or uses project waterways and riparian corridors.

District draining procedures will avoid impacts caused by changes in water chemistry, sedimentation, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and flow rates.

Repair

The shutdown of pipeline for repair can have a secondary impact on species that may reside in percolation ponds if the water source is from that pipeline. Fish have been introduced to the ponds through transfer of eggs and/or fry through the pipeline as well as through transplantation of exotics by surrounding residents or other visitors. Discontinued flows of water could lead to fish kills; however, these fish are common or exotic species.

The actual repair activities will not have an impact on migratory or wildlife species.

Excavation and Ground Disturbance

Sensitive Plant Species

Excavation and ground disturbance will be limited to a right-of-way not more than 25 feet wide over existing pipeline facilities. BMPs for reduction of impacts to plant species from access and staging would reduce impacts associated with excavation.

Sensitive Fish Species

Excavation of stretches of pipeline or roads could act as a barrier to species migration. Excavation in stream banks or beds will not impact migrating fish species, with the implementation of the measures to control erosion, scour, and sedimentation.

Sensitive Wildlife Species

Excavation could harm special-status wildlife species by causing sedimentation in aquatic habitats, collapsing burrows in upland areas, generating disturbing noise, or by physically injuring or killing individuals with construction equipment.

California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog

Some staging and access could occur through California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog upland habitat. Land disturbances from off-road access will be relatively small and temporary; staging and access will not result in substantial impact. Burrows will be avoided by choice of access routes.

Geology: The proposed project activities and their subtasks will not create additional geologic and soil-effects related to seismicity, including rupture along faults, subsidence, and liquefaction.

Santa Clara Conduit transects Landslide Hazard Zones. Staging sites will be located in feasible locations that are safe for equipment and workers. Draining will not be affected by, or result in, poor slope stability. Excavation on slopes could be affected by or result in poor slope stability.

Excavation plans will identify any areas where slope stability may be impacted by excavation activities. In areas of potential slope stability problems, measures to stabilize the slope during excavation will be taken. After excavation is complete, the area will be revegetated and repaired to ensure slope stability.

The limited amount of surface disturbance required for the maintenance activities will not increase existing seismic hazards.

Cultural Resources: As the Santa Clara Conduit and the Pacheco Conduit are not yet 50 years old, they are not considered historic properties as defined by the regulations at 36 CFR Part 60.4. The construction and installation of these facilities significantly disturbed the grounds in which they were constructed. Barring any new excavation into intact subsurface deposits, the routine activities needed to maintain and enhance the water conveyance features will have no potential to affect historic properties pursuant to the regulations at 36 CFR Part800.3(a)(1).

Indian Trust Assets: Reclamation's approval of the PMP will have no affect on ITAs as there are none.

Socioeconomic Resources: No new water conveyance facilities, roads, or other infrastructure are included as part of the PMP program. There will be no growth inducing impacts associated with implementing routine and corrective maintenance defined in the PMP.

Environmental Justice: The approval of the proposed project will not affect minority or low-income populations and communities.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed action will not contribute to changes to groundwater and surface water resources. It will not change the amount of irrigated lands. It will not contribute to major land use changes or impacts to agricultural land. As the proposed action is not expected to affect any federally listed species, it will not contribute cumulatively to any effects on federally listed species. It will not create additional geologic and soil-effects related to seismicity, including rupture along faults, subsidence, and liquefaction. It will not adversely affect cultural resources. The project will not have cumulative effects on population and housing with any other past, present or future projects.

Approval will not have highly controversial or uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown risks. Impacts associated with the proposed action are minor, short-term, localized and temporary in nature; therefore, there are no significant cumulative impacts associated with this project.